

# WILD PHOTOGRAPHY HOLIDAYS



## ITALY—THE BEST OF THE DOLOMITES

WITH JAMES RUSHFORTH

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Tre Cime di Lavaredo towers
- Jagged snow capped mountains
- Astrophotography opportunities
- Beautifully located hotels
- Traditional local food
- Picturesque villages
- Tranquil lakes, streams and rivers
- Alpine meadows
- Traditional Tyrolean architecture
- Arrival in Venice
- Striking autumn colours
- UNESCO World Heritage Site

### INTRODUCTION

Introducing one of the most breathtaking mountain ranges in the world. Located in northern Italy, the majestic spires of the Dolomites are widely regarded as the most photogenic mountain range on the planet, indeed it is rare to see an international landscape photography competition without at least one finalist image featuring these stunning natural formations. Once known as the Monti Pallidi or 'Pale Alps', the carbonate rock takes its current name from the 18th-century French mineralogist Déodat Gratet de Dolomieu and is characterised by impossibly steep towers, spires, pinnacles, jagged ridges and sharp pinnacles that thrust skyward from the picturesque villages and alpine meadows below.

These resplendent peaks are often likened to majestic natural cathedrals and invoke an almost religious sense of wonder among the South Tyrolean populace and visitors alike.

Spanning an area of some 500 square miles, this complex labyrinth of rock walls, forest, rivers, alpine pastures and wildflower meadows was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009 and is exceptionally diverse from a photographer's perspective, both in terms of appearance and culture. The unique mélange of Italian, Austrian and Ladin societies has created a trilingual community which is exceptionally distinct in nature and rich in heritage, the resulting Tyrolean architecture, tra-



ditional dress and farming methods provide the perfect foreground to the varied and ever-changing backdrops. Rather appropriately, our journey begins in the floating architectural masterpiece of Venice, the capital of northern Italy's Veneto region. Built on a lagoon in the Adriatic Sea and spanning some 100 tiny islands, the city is quite unlike any other in the world and is a veritable haven for photographers in its own right. If time constraints allow, guests are encouraged to arrive a couple of days early to fully take advantage of Venice's many photographic opportunities.

Wild Photography Holidays will provide an airport transfer service from Venice Marco Polo International Airport for the three-hour journey to the Dolomites and world-famous Alpe di Siusi plateau above the Val Gardena. Over the next week, we will traverse this magical mountain range from north to south exploring the Ampezzo, Cadini di Misurina, Sesto, Puez Odle and Sella groups. We will drive over the exposed heights of the Falzarego, Giau and Erbe passes before sampling the Tyrolean culture of the Badia, Funes and Gardena valleys. Expect to

photograph the mountain landscapes of the Tofane, Cinque Torri, Cristallo, Antelao, Sassolungo and of course the iconic Tre Cime di Lavaredo towers. These stunning peaks are complimented by tranquil lakes, streams, waterfalls and a wide variety of traditional Tyrolean architecture. Clear skies permitting, there are a number of excellent astrophotography opportunities as the Milky Way and galactic core are perfectly positioned at this time of year.

October is a particularly special time to experience the Dolomites as the autumn colours transform the lower hills into a sea of gold. This transformation is especially striking in the Dolomites due to the high density of larches that flourish in the region. Despite being conifers, these deciduous trees shed their needles as winter approaches, creating a beautiful cycle of yellow, orange and red. Furthermore, the rate of transformation varies wonderfully according to altitude and localised weather patterns, resulting in a wonderful patchwork effect that is exceptionally photogenic.



## PHOTOGRAPHIC TUTORS AND GUIDES

This photographic holiday will be led by James Rushforth, author of five guidebooks to the region covering photography, ski touring, climbing and Via Ferrata. James has lived in the Dolomites for the last 10 years and has an intimate connection with the region.

## DAILY ITINERARY

### Day 1–4: Fly to Venice and Alpe di Siusi

WPH will provide an airport transfer service from Venice Marco Polo Airport. The journey to the Dolomites takes three hours as we drive through the many vineyards of the Venetian plains to reach the world-famous Alpe di Siusi plateau above the Val Gardena.

Spanning an area of 6000 hectares (or 56 square kilometres), the Alpe di Siusi is Europe's largest high-altitude alpine meadow. The vast plateau harbours some 800 different species of wildflower and is liberally studied with rustic wooden huts, babbling streams and small ponds. Set against the superbly proportioned Sassolungo

group, an epitome of the Dolomitic ideal of what a mountain should look like, there is a nearly infinite number of creative photo opportunities to be had here. To take full advantage of the scale of this landscape we will spend several days shooting many viewpoints here with special permission to drive on the plateau to cover as much ground as possible.

During our stay in the Northern Dolomites, we'll also take the opportunity to explore the much coveted Val di Funes, photographing Chiesa di Santa Maddalena at sunset. The church, surrounded by traditional farmsteads, rolling meadows and woodland, backdropped against the dramatic north-west faces of the Odle / Geisler peaks, provides a picture-perfect scene that is amongst the most iconic in the Dolomites.

#### **Day 5: Onwards to Cortina d'Ampezzo**

Our adventure continues as we drive towards probably the most high-profile town in the Dolomites – the beautiful Cortina d'Ampezzo. After a hearty breakfast, we descend briefly westwards, dropping down into the Valle Isarco, a region famous for its white wine as a favourable microclimate comprised of hot summer days and cool nights at vintage time ensuring the grapes reach maturity with high sugar content. The medieval town of Chiusa, dominated by the Benedictine nunnery 'Monastero di Sabiona' and a member of 'I Borghi più belli d'Italia', a private association promoting the most beautiful villages in Italy, makes for an excellent stop on the way.

Then we turn back east, traversing the narrow and scenically stunning Passo delle Erbe – passing underneath the mighty Sass de Putia to reach the Val Badia. After pausing to photograph a series of secluded watermills,



we continue to Lago di Braies, an idyllic lake that provided the setting for the Italian television series 'Un passo dal cielo'. While the characteristic stilted boat-house at the northern end of the lake provides the classic vantage point, compositions abound as we traverse the turquoise waters backdropped by the Croda del Becco mountains which are said to house a gateway to the underworld, hence the Ladin name 'Sass dla Porta' (gate rock).

A final drive east along the Val Pusteria leads to the Sesto Dolomites, Lago di Dobbiaco, Lago di Landro and ultimately Cortina d'Ampezzo – our home and base for the remainder of the trip.

#### **Day 6–8: Cortina d'Ampezzo**

Boasting a proud legacy of accolades such as host city for the 1956 Winter Olympics, the namesake of a certain popular Ford (the two of which entered into an unlikely



marriage in a sport called 'Auto-bobbing' – well worth a Google!), favourite haunt of celebrities such as George Clooney, the setting of the Bond film 'For Your Eyes Only' and temporary home of writer Ernest Hemingway, Cortina d'Ampezzo is arguably the most high-profile town in the Dolomites.

Built astride the River Boite, the town is perfectly situated between the Falzarego and Giau passes while lying in close proximity to the Parco delle Dolomiti d'Ampezzo, an intricate network of peaks, valleys, streams and forest covering some 37,000 hectares of alpine wilderness. Over the next few days, we will explore the famous five towers of Cinque Torri, photograph reflections of the Tofane in the crystal waters of Lago Limides, take a Jeep

ride up to the remote Croda da Lago and hike to the trio of monoliths that make up the Tre Cime - home to one of the six great north faces of the Alps and an iconic symbol of the Dolomites.

#### **Day 9: Homeward Flights**

After breakfast guests will be transferred back to Venice Marco Polo International Airport for homeward flights.

The journey back is shorter and takes approximately two hours. WPH services finish upon arrival at the airport.

#### **JOINING INSTRUCTIONS**

Wild Photography Holidays will provide a transfer service from both Venice Marco Polo Airport and Piazzale Roma

in the heart of Venice for the three-hour journey to the Dolomites.

#### **AIRPORT TRANSFERS TO VENICE**

If you do wish to arrive early to explore the sites of Venice there are several transport options to get you into the city centre.

#### **From Venice Marco Polo**

**By water** – This is perhaps the best way to approach Venice as it provides a spectacular view of the city on the way in. There are several options depending on time constraints and your budget. A private water taxi is the most direct and expensive, the 'airport link' boat stops at several major points of interest and finally, the Alilaguna

ferry service operates three different routes and is the cheapest but also the slowest option.

It should be noted the waterbus (Vaporetto) service run by ACTV around Venice and the lagoon does not as yet serve Marco Polo Airport.

All of these services can be booked from the arrivals hall and public information desk at the airport.

**By public bus** – The ATVO coaches and ACTV airport bus service both run between Piazzale Roma (the main bus terminal in Venice), and Venice Marco Polo airport. These provide a cheaper if less stylish approach to Venice and typically take between 20 and 30 minutes. Tickets can be obtained from the information desk inside the airport.

**By 'traditional' taxi** – There is a busy taxi rank outside both Venice Marco Polo and Piazzale Roma.

#### **From Venice Treviso**

By public bus – The ATVO public bus service runs between Venice Treviso and Piazzale Roma (the main bus terminal in Venice). The journey takes 70–80 minutes and departs approximately every half an hour. Tickets can be bought from the ATVO counter inside the airport or at the ATVO ticket machine just outside the entrance.

#### **WHAT'S INCLUDED**

- Airport transfer
- 8 nights accommodation
- All Meals
- All transport
- Photographic tutors/tuition



#### **WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED**

- International flights
- Alcoholic beverages
- Travel insurance

#### **ACCOMMODATION**

We will stay in a variety of high-quality accommodations, always located in beautiful surroundings and offering good access to our chosen photo locations. Our first four nights will be spent around the plateau of the Alpe di Siusi in a well-appointed guest house with cosy rooms and high-quality facilities. Whilst our final four nights will be spent in Cortina d'Ampezzo, a characteristic and stunningly situated town in the Ampezzo basin. Rooms are typically traditionally Tyrolean in style, with wood-panelled interiors and carved wooden furniture. Bathrooms are en-suite and of a high standard.

#### **FOOD**

Italy has long been celebrated for its delectable food and drink and the Dolomites are no different, with superb quality food a welcome characteristic in the restaurants, bars and mountain rifugios. However, just as the complex history of the area has left its mark on the language and culture, so too has it had an effect on the cuisine and the dishes are characterised by a unique fusion of Italian, Austrian and Ladin influences. We will eat our evening meal together at our accommodation. Lunches will generally be 'Al Fresco' to allow for maximum time in the field, although occasionally they may be eaten at our accommodation. Breakfasts will always be at our base.



Please ensure that any special dietary needs are mentioned on the booking form.

#### **ALCOHOL**

Alcohol in the Dolomites is reasonably priced and there is a bar in all of our hotels and restaurants.

#### **SPENDING MONEY**

Italy is part of the Eurozone and cash can be easily obtained at the airport ATM machines; these are also plentiful throughout the towns of the Dolomites. There will be opportunities to buy presents and souvenirs in some of our locations. Credit cards are accepted in most shops and retail departments.

#### **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

Please ensure that you have adequate travel insurance that includes repatriation in case of an accident, as well as equipment and personal belongings cover.

#### **PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS**

A passport valid for at least three months beyond the length of stay required by all except nationals of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden who are only required to produce national identity cards issued by the authorities in their countries of origin. Visas are not required but a return ticket will need to be shown by those with Australian, Canadian and USA nationals. For other nationalities please enquire before booking.

#### **LANGUAGE**

One of the most visible and defining characteristics of the local culture within the Dolomites is undoubtedly the language, and first-time visitors will no doubt be struck by the practice of signing most place names in three languages – Italian, German and Ladin. At the last census, 60% of the local population spoke German as their first language, 30% Italian and 10% the ancient Rhaetian language of Ladin.



Our journey starts in the northern Dolomites which is characterised by German speakers, whilst Cortina d'Ampezzo and the southern Dolomites are primarily Italian speaking.

#### **CLIMATE**

Situated on the southern edge of the Alpine Arc, the Dolomites are characterised by distinct seasons and large temperature variations. Annually the region receives less rainfall than the surrounding Alps, with the southern mountains bearing the worst of the weather as moist air masses move up the Venetian plains. The range is usually snow-covered between December and April while thunderstorms are common through high summer. Due to the elevation, the temperature range varies drastically, occasionally reaching +30°C in the valleys in summer and falling to a chilling -30°C on the summit of the Marmolada during the winter. Pack for all weather and be sure to bring lots of warm clothes for night photography when the temperatures drop dramatically due to the altitude.



### CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS

The best solution to temperature control is to have a number of layers available, from lightweight thermal underwear through to mid-layer insulation and finally a windproof jacket. For the lower body choose a pair of trousers that you can move in easily rather than jeans as the latter take a very long time to dry should we be caught in a shower and provide little protection against wind-chill when wet. If you have any questions feel free to contact us at any time before the trip.

### Suggested Clothing and Equipment

- Warm trousers (not jeans)
- Long sleeved thermal tops and leggings
- Long sleeved shirt/tee-shirt
- Light fleece/wool jumper
- Warm fleece type jacket
- Waterproof Jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Warm socks
- Walking boots/shoes

- Light warm hat
- Gloves
- Casual clothes for hotel wear

### PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AND INFORMATION

- Camera bag or backpack such as the Flipside or Trekker series designed by LowePro.
- A camera with interchangeable lenses such as a digital SLR or a mirrorless system camera.
- A set of lenses to cover the whole range from wide-angle to telephoto, for example...  
For full-frame cameras: 16–35mm wide-angle, 24–105mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom. For crop format cameras: 10–20mm wide-angle, 17–70mm mid-range and a 70–200mm or longer tele zoom.
- Spare camera (highly recommended)
- Sturdy tripod – not only useful for low light photography but also for accurate framing and composition of landscape and close-up images.
- Cable release – mechanical or electronic remote to avoid shake on long exposures.
- Although not essential camera filters such as neutral density, graduated filters and polarisers can be useful. At least one neutral density filter in the range of 4–6 stops would be a good addition to your kit.
- Lens cloth
- Sensor cleaning device (optional)
- Lightweight ‘trekking’ absorbent towel for drying cameras and equipment



- Rain cover for camera and camera bag
- Sufficient memory cards for the whole holiday as it may not be possible to buy more during the trip.
- Film users should bring enough film, as it may not be possible to buy in many places.
- A laptop with the image editing applications of your choice, essential for checking and presenting images during the trip and for one-on-one sessions with the tutor. All of the places we stay in have Wi-Fi.
- Backup storage device (optional)
- Spare batteries and chargers
- All the electrical sockets are European two-pin, so you might need a travel plug adapter.

### PARTNERS

Non-photographer partners will be very welcome. Although this is primarily a photography holiday we also visit some very beautiful and relaxing places. If any participants do not wish to join the walks/photographic ses-

sions they will be able to relax in and around the accommodation. The cost will be the same for photographers and non-photographers.

### OUTDOOR TRAVEL

This is an outdoor travel holiday and the itinerary is dependent on the weather, local conditions and other variables. Wild Photography Holidays may use their discretion to change the itinerary should conditions dictate this; your health, safety and enjoyment will always be our primary concern when making such changes.

### MORE INFORMATION

We hope that this information has answered some of your questions about the holiday, It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.

### BOOKING THIS HOLIDAY

Fill in the [online booking form](#), or give us a call on +44 (0)1270 440222.



### LINKS

View [images and information for this tour](#) on the website.

Read about [our approach to teaching photography](#)

All Images in this PDF by James Rushforth.